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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MUTHANNA AND DHI QAR OFFICIALS CAUTIOUSLY
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In an October 30 meeting with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and the DCM, political leaders and security chiefs of Dhi Qar and Muthanna provinces characterized their provinces as relatively calm but raised concerns about the number and readiness of the ISF in their areas. They stressed the importance of securing Baghdad, saying "if the GOI succeeds in Baghdad, then we will succeed." Dhi Qar and Muthanna are the two southern provinces where MNF-I has transferred security responsibility to the Iraqi security forces (ISF). End summary.

12. (C) The provincial council (PC) chairmen, governor or deputy governor (in the case of Muthanna), police chiefs, and army commanders from Dhi Qar and Muthanna said that their provinces were relatively calm thanks to good coordination between the security agencies and to good political relationships with different groups in the provinces. Yet they also expressed concern at the capability of their forces to maintain security should the situation change. They cited insufficient arms and vehicles for the ISF, with the chairman of the Muthanna PC claiming that half of the police force in his province lacked weapons. The governor and police chief of Dhi Qar noted that their province lacked a police training academy, and the Iraqi army commander in Muthanna said that his ability to conduct training was hampered by land ownership disputes at the former Japanese base in Muthanna. Leaders from both provinces characterized the militias as "better armed than us" and called for the central government to disburse funds earmarked for provincial security enhancements.

13. (C) The police chief from Dhi Qar noted that one factor facilitating the province's relative calm was a "political agreement" reached between the province's Italian forces, the ISF, and militia elements. "We can deal with the militias by social means and consensus," the police chief continued, noting that he had taken the Italians to negotiate with the militias. "Sometimes it is easy to deal with a problem: if the militias say not to pass on a certain stretch of road, you can use another road. The Italians have a good relationship with all." The British Chief of Staff from MNF-SE agreed that the Italian forces had come to a reasonable political accommodation in Dhi Qar, noting the need to "separate out moderate elements of Iraqi militias and have a dialogue with them, if they are willing." He related that MNF-SE's challenge is how to support security in the south with limited forces and described Basrah security and controlling the flow of arms across the Iranian border as MNF-SE's most important priorities. While agreeing that good relationships had allowed for a calm transfer of power, the Iraqi army commander in Dhi

Qar said that he awaited only a "political order" to move against the militias.

14. (C) Leaders from both provinces emphasized the importance of employment and economic development. The governor of Dhi Qar, for example, hailed a U.S.-supported irrigation project but called for it to be doubled. He likewise expressed hope that the opening of a regional office of the Ministry of Oil would allow for exploitation of six existing oil wells. Officials from both provinces also expressed concern about the security situation in Baghdad, with the governor of Dhi Qar saying "if the GOI succeeds in Baghdad, then we will succeed." He and the deputy governor of Muthanna urged U.S. support for Prime Minister Maliki and his government. Hadley replied that the media stories questioning the degree of U.S. support for Maliki were simply untrue and that President Bush fully supported the Maliki unity government as it was the result of a process in which over 12 million Iraqis voted.
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